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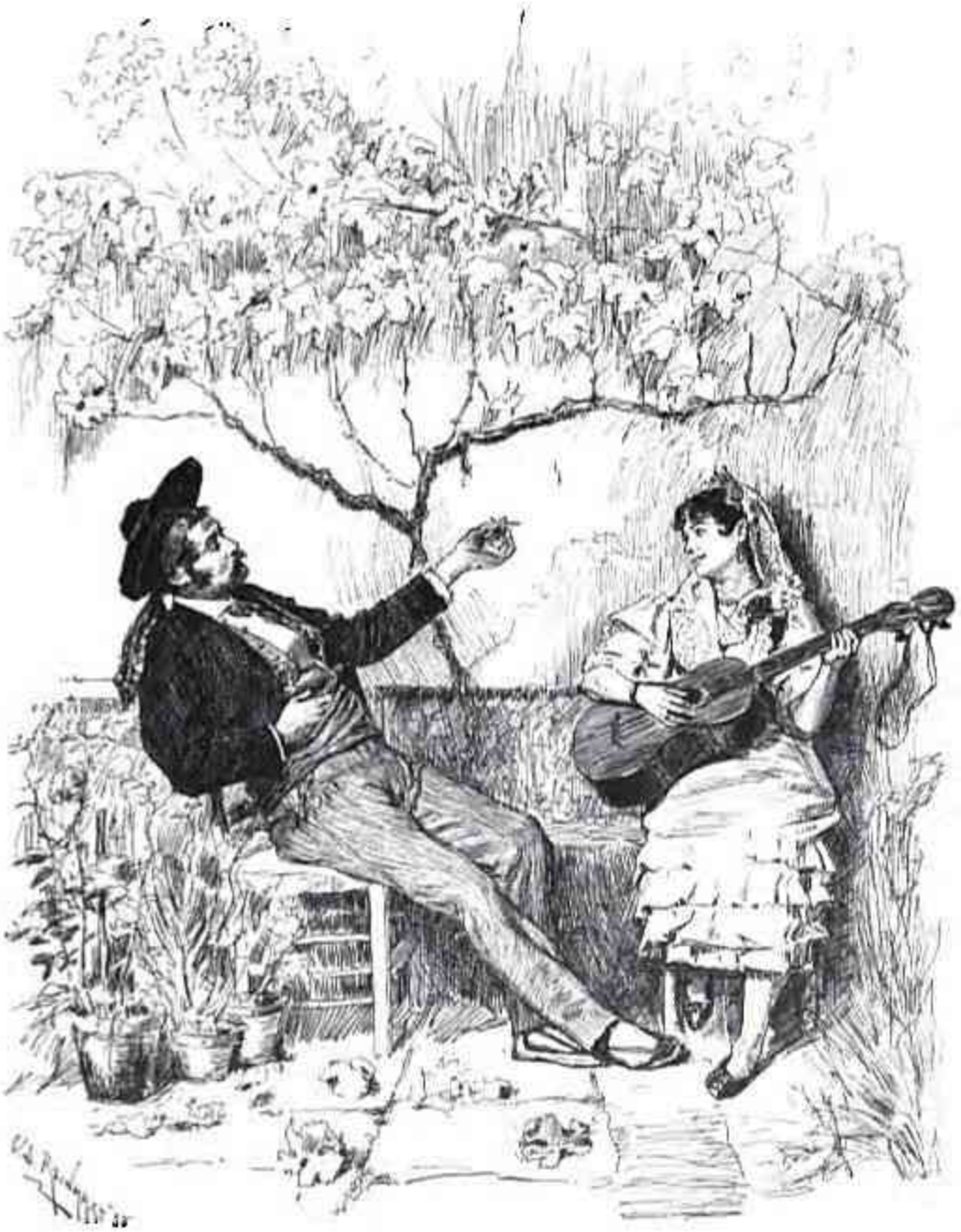

And then she would take the guitar * * * and sit out in the little garden.

THE PRETTY SISTER OF JOSÉ

BY

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

AUTHOR OF "THAT LASS O' LOWRIES," "LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY," ETC., ETC

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1889

THE PRETTY SISTER OF JOSÉ

By Frances Hodgson Burnett

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Contents

THE PRETTY SISTER OF JOSÉ

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

List of Illustrations

And then She Would Take the Guitar

Took Her to the Public Gardens

Shook the Small Stray Blossoms out of Her Hair

Addressing the President of the Games

We Will Make It More Amusing

She Leaned Against the Side of The Well

Her Hands Still Clasped Behind Her Head

Pepita Sat Down on the Threshold

Shuddering and Sobbing Like a Beaten Child

The Slender Body Breathless and Panting

She is a Pretty Young Girl

Dios! Dios! he Murmured

THE PRETTY SISTER OF JOSÉ

CHAPTER I.

It had taken him a long time, and it had cost him—José—much hard labor, to prepare for his aged grandmother and Pepita the tiny home outside Madrid, to which he at last brought them in great triumph one hot summer's day, when the very vine-leaves and orange-trees themselves were dusty. It had been a great undertaking for him in the first place, for he was a slow fellow—José; slow as he was dull and kind and faithful to Pepita and the grandmother. He had a body as big as an ox, and a heart as big as his body, but he was slow and dull in everything but one thing—that was his carpenter work. He was well enough at that, and more than well enough, for he had always had a fancy and a knack for it from the time when as a boy he had worked in his uncle's vineyards and tilled his fields and fed his beasts. His uncle had been counted a rich man among his neighbors, but when his sister and her husband died and left the two children, José and Pepita, penniless, and with no protector save himself and their grandmother, already an old woman, it was upon the grandmother that the burden fell, for he did nothing for them except to give them, grudgingly now and then, a few poor vegetables or a little fallen fruit. It is true that when José was old enough to labor in the fields he gave him work to do, but he paid him ill and treated him ill also, giving him poor food and harsh words, and often enough blows the poor lad did not deserve. So it came about that while he was at his work José fell into the way of planning to escape from all this, and make another home for himself and his pretty child-sister and the old woman. He knew there was only one way to do it: if he could carry his one gift where it would be of more use to him than it could possibly be in a poor small village; if he could carry it to a market where there were more people and where work was better paid for. Where the king and queen were, of course, there must be more money, and one could find more to do and live better. It was Padre Alejandro, the village priest, who had suggested this to him first. He was a kind, jovial old fellow, the padre, and had seen something of the world, too, long ago, which was perhaps why he was never very hard upon a simple sinner who went to confession, and could give a bit of

unecclesiastical advice now and then. He had always been kind to José, and as Pepita had grown prettier and prettier every day, he had often spoken of her to old Jovita, and said she should be well taught and taken care of, and once even—when she had come into the house with a basket of grapes on her little head, rose-flushed with the hot day, her black hair curling in moist silken rings on her forehead—he had been betrayed into the worldly remark that such pretty young things ought to have something brighter to look forward to than hard work and scant fare, which made them old before their time, and left them nothing to look back upon. But he only said it to Jovita, and Jovita only stared a little, it never having occurred to her that there was anything much in the world but hard labor and poverty. And what difference did it make that one was pretty, except that it became more probable that some gay, lazy fellow would pretend to fall in love with one, and then after marriage leave one all the work to do and a houseful of hungry children to feed? She had seen that often enough. Had it not been so with Pepita's mother, who died at twenty-five almost an old woman, worn out with trouble and hard usage?

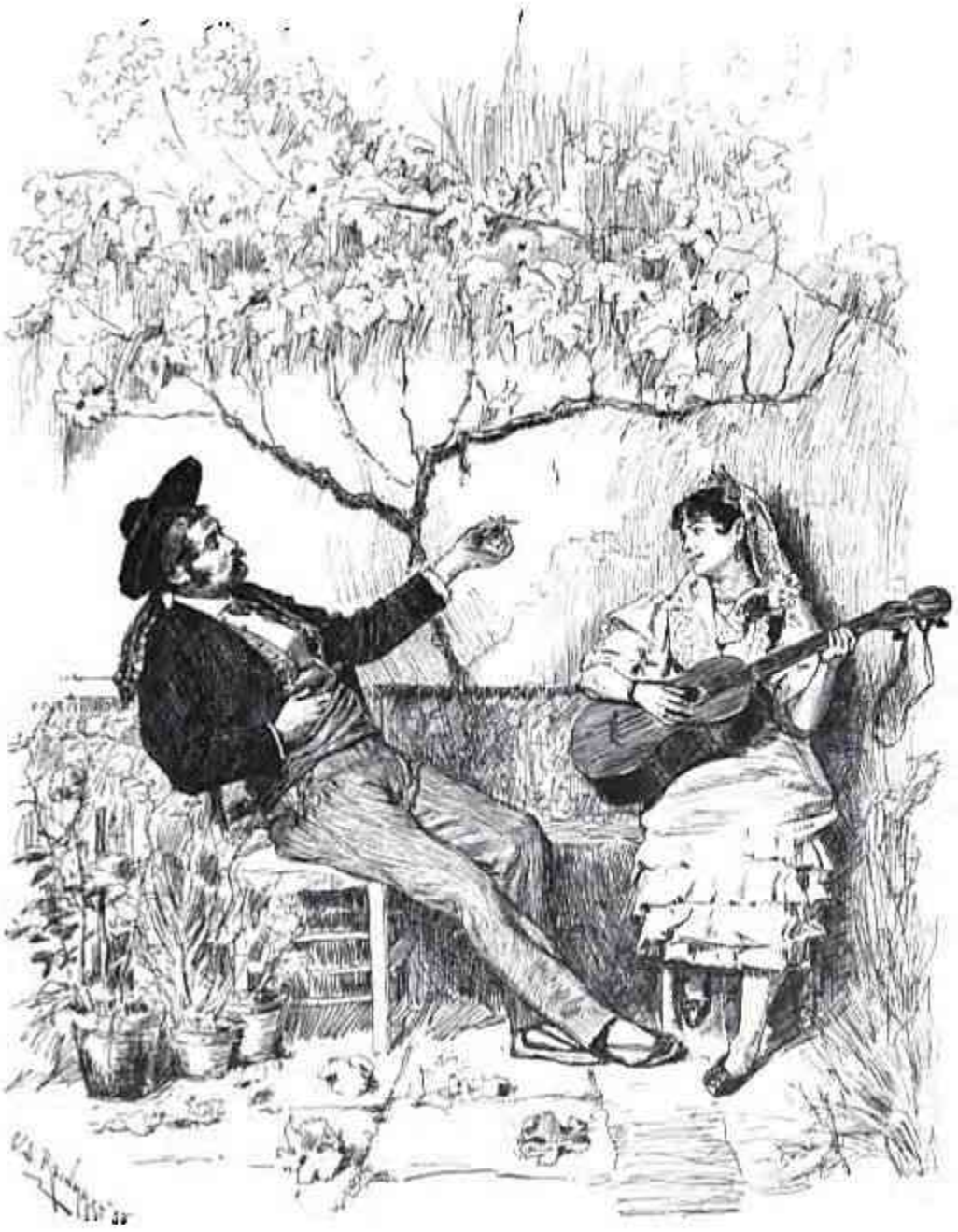
But afterward, when Padre Alejandro saw José, he spoke of Pepita to him also, though only as if incidentally among other things.

"She should marry some good fellow who could take care of her," he said. "If you go to Madrid it will also be better for her."

And so the end of it all was that after much slow planning and many hopes and fears, and more than one disappointment, there came a day when the uncle was thrown into a violent rage by losing his best and most patient worker, and the poor cottage stood empty, and José and Pepita and Jovita found themselves in a new world.

What a new world it seemed to them all! Through the help of Padre Alejandro and an old friend of his, José had work bringing him pay which appeared absolute wealth to him. The cottage, with its good walls and roof, its neat rooms and garden, being compared with the mere hut they had left behind, seemed a palace. For the first few days, indeed, Jovita was scarce at ease; to feel no necessity for heavy labor, to have food enough, to be so comfortable, seemed unnatural, as if it might finally bring disaster. But it was not so with Pepita. All the joy of youth, all its delights and

expectations filled her heart. To be so near the great, grand city, to look forward to seeing all its splendors, to walk in its streets, to share in the amusements she had heard of—this was rapture. If she had been pretty before, she became now ten times prettier; her lovely eyes grew larger with laughter and wonder and joy; her light feet almost danced; her color was like that of a damask rose. Each day brought new innocent happiness to her. When José came home from his work at night, she sat by his side and asked him a thousand questions. Had he seen the palace—had he seen the king or the queen—what were the people doing—were the public gardens beautiful?



And then she would take the guitar * * * and sit out in the little garden.

And then she would take the guitar, which had belonged to her gay father in his gayest days, and sit out in the little garden, among the vines and lemon-trees and oleanders, and play and sing one song after another, while José smoked and rested, and wondered at and delighted in her. It was she who had inherited all her father's gayety and spirit. José had none of them, and, being slow and simple, had always found her a wonder and a

strange pleasure. She had, indeed, been the one bright thing in his life, and even her wilfulness had a charm for him. He always gave way to it and was content. Had she not even once defied the uncle when no one else would have dared to do it? holding her little head up and confronting him in such a burst of pretty rage that the old curmudgeon had been quite quelled for once in his life, and had ever afterward treated her with a kind of respect, even saying to a neighbor that "the lad was a fool, but the little devil had something in her, after all."

In all his plannings it was Pepita José had thought of first. Madrid to him was only a sort of setting for Pepita; the clean, comfortable cottage a home for Pepita; the roses and lemon blossoms she would wear in her hair; under the fine grape-vines she would sit in the evening and play on her guitar. His wages would give her comfort and buy her pretty simple dresses. And then every one would see her beauty, and when she went to mass, or with himself and Jovita to the Prado or the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto, people would look at her and tell each other how pretty she was, and all this would end in time in a good marriage perhaps. And she would be loved by some nice fellow, and have a home of her own, and be as happy as the day was long. There was only one obstacle in the way of this excellent plan; it was only a small obstacle, but—it was Pepita herself! Singularly enough, Pepita had a fixed antipathy to marriage. She had early announced her intention of remaining unmarried, and those young men who in her native village had desired to make love to her had been treated with disapproval and disdain. Knowing as little of love as a young bird unfledged, her coldness was full of innocent cruelty. She made no effort to soften any situation. She was willing to dance and laugh and sing, but when she found herself confronting lover-like tremors and emotion, she was unsparing candor itself.

"Why should I listen to you?" she had said more than once. "I do not love you. You do not please me. When you wish to marry me, I hate you. Go away, and speak to some one else."

"I will never marry any one," she said to José. "I will stay with you and be happy. Girls who marry grow ugly and are wretched. Their husbands do not love them after they are married. They must work and slave and take care of the house and the children. Look at Tessa! Her husband used to be

wild about her. She could make him pale with misery if she turned away from him; he used to follow her about everywhere. Now he makes eyes at Juanita, and beats Tessa if she complains. And don't we both remember how it was with our mother? I will never love any one, and never be married. Let them love me if they are so stupid, but I will be left alone. I care nothing for any of them."

The truth is that José knew it was what she remembered of her mother's unhappiness and what Jovita had told her, which was the foundation of all this. Did he not remember it himself, and remember, with a shudder, those first miserable years of their childhood—the great, beautiful, wretched eyes of their mother, their gay, handsome father, and his careless cruelty and frequent brutality? Had not Pepita and himself clung together hidden in the loft at night, listening to their mother's sobs, and often to the sound of blows and curses rained down upon her because she was no longer a beauty, and there were beauties who had smiles to bestow on handsome fellows who were free, and even upon those who were not? It was enough to irritate any handsome fellow—this one had thought—to come home to a squalid place after enjoyment, and be forced to face poverty and children and a haggard wife with large staring eyes, red with weeping. Yes, Pepita and José remembered all this, and upon Pepita's character it had left curious traces. Young as she was, she had awakened quite grand passions in more than one heart, and on two or three occasions the suitors had been of far better fortune than herself—one of them, indeed, being the only son of a rich farmer, who might have chosen a wife of much greater importance than this pretty, scornful child, and whose family rebelled bitterly against his folly, and at last sent him away to Seville, but not before Pepita herself had coolly trodden him under her small feet.

"I like you less than any of them," she said, fixing her great, direct eyes upon him when he revealed his frenzy. "Go and marry that girl your father chose for you—if she will have you. They have no need to be afraid and speak ill of me. I don't want you. I can't bear to have you stand near me."

To José it never occurred to complain of her, but Jovita's sense of worldly advantage was outraged at this time, and she did not hesitate to express herself with much freedom and grumbling.

"God knows, I want no haste," she said; "but this is a chance for any girl. And see what a fool she is. But that is as it always happens. There will come along some worthless fellow, and she will be fooled like the rest, and be ready enough to run after him."

"I!" said Pepita, who stood in the doorway. "I!" And she opened her dark eyes in genuine anger and amazement.

"Yes, you," answered Jovita. "And you will be worse than any of them. Girls who think themselves too good to be spoken to are always easiest to coax when they find their match. Let him come, and you'll drop like a ripe grape."

"He will never come," said Pepita. "Never!" And there was not a shade of doubt in her look—nothing but cold indignation at Jovita's ill-humor. "I am not afraid of men. They are all stupid. They think they can have anything they want, and they can have nothing. They have to ask, and it is the girls who can say 'No;' and then they are miserable, and beg and beg until one detests them. If any one said 'No' to me, I would not let them see it hurt me. They should think I did not care."

"You will not always say 'No,'" grumbled Jovita. "Wait till the day for 'Yes' comes. You'll say it fast enough. That's the way with women."

A bewitching little smile slowly curved Pepita's lips and crept into her eyes.

"I am not a woman," she said, looking out at the sun-warmed vineyards. "He said so himself. Felipe said, 'You are not a woman; you are a witch, and no one can touch your heart or conquer you.' I will be a witch."

Secretly she had liked those words better than any of the adoring praises she had heard before. She liked the suggestion that she was invincible and safe from all danger—to be a witch—to be free from all this disastrous folly—to be unconquerable. Yes, that pleased her. It was not her fault that they would fall in love with her. What did she do to them? Nothing. She never allowed them to come near her or touch her; she never gave them tender glances or words. She laughed and was Pepita—that was all. Then it was no fault of hers.

And yet her little heart was warm enough. She loved José passionately; she loved Jo-vita; she loved little children and animals, and they loved her in return; old men and women adored her because of her simple, almost childish kindness and her readiness to help those who needed her young strength and bright spirit. It was only men who made love who were shown no mercy. She did not know that they needed mercy. She did not understand—that was all. It was as José had known it would be. When on the first holiday be took her to the public gardens with Jovita, every one who passed them gave her a second look; many turned to watch her; certainly there was not a man who did not glance over his shoulder at the bewitching girlish figure with the small round waist, at the piquant radiant face, at the well-carried little head with the red rose blooming in its cloud of soft black hair.

When on the first holiday he took her to the public gardens with Jovita.

It was not long before two or three who were José's fellow-workmen sought him out and greeted him with great warmth. They had, it appeared, a great deal to say and many attentions to lavish upon him. Such a fine fellow, this José—such a good fellow—such a workman as was seldom

seen in Madrid. And what a fine day for pleasure. And the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto—there never were such gardens for sport. And all the time each one looked at Pepita, and lucky indeed was the man with mother and sisters to help him to make friends. And never had old Jovita met with such civilities, and encountered such deference. Pepita had the joy of a young bird in its first flight. The air of gayety enlivening everything, the people in their holiday clothes, the blue sky, the sunshine, the cheap simple pleasures of the day, were intoxicating delights to her. She made friends with the girls and their parents, and was even gracious to the young men who hung about José, and somehow seemed to find his neighborhood more attractive than any other. It was from one of these young men (his name was Manuel) she first heard of Sebastiano—the gay, the wonderful, the renowned Sebastiano. He had asked her, this Manuel, if she was going to the Plaza de Toros to see the bull-fight the following week, and when she said she did not know—that she had never seen a bull-fight—he found a great deal to say. He described the wonders of the great bull ring, where twelve thousand people could be accommodated, and where grand and beautiful ladies richly dressed and surrounded by their lovers and husbands uttered cries of joy and excitement as the fight became more dangerous, and both bulls and toreadors showed greater courage and fire; he described the costumes, the music, the picadors dashing in upon their horses; the banderilleros with their darts and ribbons; the matador with his reckless daring, his nerves and muscles of steel, and his lightning leaps. And then he described Sebastiano. Never before, it appeared from his enthusiasm, had Madrid known such a matador as Sebastiano. Never one so handsome, so dashing, so universally adored. When he appeared in the ring, what a roar of applause went up. When he made his proud bow to the president, and said, "I go to slay this bull for the honor of the people of Madrid and the most excellent president of this tourney," and threw his hat away and moved forward, waving his scarlet cloak, what excitement there was awakened. Songs were sung about him in the streets, fans were ornamented with pictures of his daring deeds, there were stories of great ladies who had wept their eyes out for love of him, and as to the women of his own class, there was not a girl in Madrid who did not dream of him.

"Why?" said Pepita, in her cold, soft voice, and with the simply cold and curious look in her great, richly lashed eyes.

"Because they are in love with him—all of them," replied Manuel, sweepingly.

"Why?" said Pepita, again.

'" Why?'" Manuel echoed, somewhat bewildered by the frank, indifferent ignoring of all natural reasons in this question—'"why?' Because he is so tall and strong and well made, because he is handsome, because he is more daring and graceful than any of the others—because he is Sebastiano."

Pepita laughed, and opened and shut her fan quickly.

"Why do you laugh?" inquired Manuel.

"I was thinking how he must despise them," she answered.

"Oh, no," said Manuel, who was not very clever; "he is always good to women. There was Sarita—a poor little thing who had always lived in the country. She saw him at her first bull-fight and was never happy afterward. She could think of nothing else, and she was too innocent to hide it. She used to slip away from home and contrive to follow him when he did not see her. She found a woman who knew some one who knew him, and she gave her all her little savings in presents to bribe her to be her friend and talk to her about him. Once or twice she met him, and because she was such a pretty little one, he spoke kindly to her and praised her eyes and her dancing. He did not know she was in love with him."

Pepita laughed again.

"Why do you do that?" Manuel asked.

"He knew," said Pepita. "He would *think* she was, even if she cared nothing for him, and since she did care he would know before she did and would be proud of it, and make it as much worse as he could."

Manuel gazed at her a moment in silence, twirling his rather small mustacha. This beautiful, cool, mocking little person, the melting softness of whose eyes and lips should have promised such feminine tenderness and emotion, bewildered him greatly; it was plain that she was wholly unmoved by the glories of Sebastiano, and saw no glamour in his

romances. What other girl would have asked "Why?"—and in that tone? It was difficult to go on with his story.

"He could not help it that she was in love with him," he said. "And she could not help it."

"Why?" inquired Pepita for the third time, and with a prettier coolness than before.

"Why," stammered Manuel, "because—because that is the way with all of them."

Pepita showed all her little gleaming teeth, and then put the stem of a rose between them and held it there like a cigarette as she looked under her eyelashes at the people. The rose was not as red as her scornful little mouth.

"He was always kind to her when he saw her," continued Manuel. "Once he gave her his *devisa*. When she died she held it in her hand and would not let it go. It was buried with her. She was a pretty child—Sarita—but she had always lived in the country and knew nothing."

"I have always lived in the country and I know nothing," said Pepita, mocking him with her great eyes; "but *I* can help anything I choose. It should be the others who cannot help it."

She thought him dull and tiresome, and soon wished he would go away, but he could not help it, and lingered about with all sorts of stupid excuses. The more she bewildered him, the more he was fascinated. It was almost enough to stand and stare at her and hear her voice as she talked to the others. How pretty she was—that girl—how she held her head as if she was some high-born lady instead of a peasant! When some passer-by, more bold than the rest, made (loud enough to be heard) some comment upon her beauty, it did not disturb her in the least—it was as if it were nothing to her. Was it possible that there could live a girl who did not care that she was so pretty? But to imagine that she did not care was to make a great mistake—she cared very much. Ever since she had been a tiny child, her little mirror and the water of the fountain had reflected back to her this pretty face, with its soft rose of cheek and mouth, its dark liquid eyes, and soft babyish rings of hair curling on the forehead. She had always heard

too that she was pretty, and as she had grown older she had found out something else, namely, that she had a power more strong and subtle than that of her beauty—a power people did not even try to resist. She did not call it by any name herself or understand it in the least. She often wondered at it, and even sometimes had a childish secret terror lest the Evil One might have something to do with it; particularly when without making any effort, when simply standing apart and looking on at the rest, with a little smile she had drawn to her side the stupid love-making for which she cared nothing. It was not so with Dolores and Maria and Isabella, who were pretty too. Somehow, handsome as they were, they must use their eyes on their lovers, they must laugh and dance and talk to be adored, while she need do nothing but be Pepita.

When, late that evening, she sat with José under the vines, the air about them heavy with jasmine and orange and lemon blossoms, she asked a great many questions about the bull-fight. It must be a grand thing to see—so many people, such gay colors, such music. José could describe it better than Manuel. He must tell her all about it.

He described it as well as he could, and in spite of his slow speech made quite an exciting picture for her; or rather she found it exciting, as she found all things just now in their novelty. Before Jovita and she had arrived, while he was making his small preparations for them, he had seen a bull-fight or so, and no point of detail had escaped his deliberate mind. He always remembered things—José.

"But you shall go," he said; "you shall go and see for yourself the very next time. It comes next week. We will go and take Jovita."

Pepita clapped her hands for joy. She sprang up and danced a few steps in her childish delight.

"That will be happiness," she said. "What happiness! Perhaps the king and queen will be there!"

"You will see Sebastiano," said José, seriously.

"I do not care for Sebastiano," cried Pepita, petulantly.

"You do not care," said José, in blank amaze, "for Sebastiano? You do not care?"

Pepita shrugged her shoulders.

"They talk too much of him," she answered, "and he is too vain. He thinks all women are in love with him, and that if a girl comes from the country she knows nothing, and will die of love if she only sees him."

"I did not know that," said José, staring. "I never heard them say so. They call him a fine fellow."

"I never heard them say so," Pepita answered scornfully; "but I know it. I am sure he is a fool," which remark caused José much bewilderment, and led him to reflect long and deeply, but did not, however, lead him to any conclusion but that Pepita was ruled by one of her caprices. He was rather afraid to admit that he himself had enjoyed the magnificent honor of seeing this great hero out of the ring; that through a quite miraculous favor he had even been allowed to speak to him and to hear him speak as he stood, the centre of a circle of admirers in a wine-shop. He had been saving this to tell Pepita, but now he thought it well to save it a little longer.

But when the day of the bull-fight arrived it was not possible to conceal it.

Ah! the wonders, the splendors of that day from the first hour! At its very dawning Pepita was up and singing. Jovita must take her rest, that she might be in her best humor to enjoy the festivities, and not spoil them by grumbling. Pepita needed no rest; her little feet danced as she moved; as she made her preparations for the morning meal she chatted incessantly to José, asking a thousand questions. Everything conspired to add to her joys. The sky was deep brilliant blue, but there was a light breeze to make the heat bearable; the birds sang until their little throats throbbed; the flowers in the garden seemed to have flung out new masses of bloom to make the small world about them brighter. In her chamber, near the roof, Pepita's gala dress lay upon her bed, her new little shoes upon the floor; she had seen them in the moonlight each time she had awakened in the night. A year ago it would not have seemed possible that such pretty finery could

ever be hers, even in dreams; but now almost anything seemed possible in this new and enchanting life.

And when she was dressed how bewitching she was! how her rose of a face glowed and dimpled! how enchanting was the velvet darkness of her eyes! how airy the poise of her little black head, with its brilliant flower tucked in at the side of the knot of curly hair! Jovita stared at her and made a queer half-internal sound of exclamation. It was not her way to express approval at all freely, and she had no opinion of people who wasted time in telling girls they were pretty. But José looked at the girl as he might have looked at some rare tropical bird which had suddenly flown into the house. He looked and looked again, pulling his mustache, his not always alert face warming.

"Yes, yes," he said, "it all looks very well; that dress is pretty. None of the other girls will look better. Even Candida—"

Pepita laughed. Candida had been considered a great beauty in the village they had left, but she knew she was prettier than Candida.

José laughed also, though he scarcely knew why. Then with rather a cautious and uncertain air he produced a gay fan—a cheap one, but brilliant with color.

"This—" he began.

Pepita caught it from him, and unfurled it with a quick turn of her wrist. On one side was a picture—a dashing erect figure, in a richly hued costume.

"It is Sebastiano," said José, guiltily.

Pepita nodded her head and smiled.

"I knew it," she said; "I knew he would look like that."

"There is no other man who can slay a bull as he can," said José.

"Let him slay them," answered Pepita. And she stood and waved her fan with the prettiest inscrutable air in the world.

The journey to the Plaza de Toros was almost as delightful as the bull-fight itself to Pepita. The streaming crowds of people, all bent in one direction, and all in their gayest dress and mood, laughing, jostling each other, chatting, exchanging salutations and jokes, the grand carriages rolling by with fine ladies and gentlemen in them, the rattling old diligences, omnibuses, and *tartanes*, whose passengers seemed more hilarious than the occupants of the more splendid equipages, the ringing of mule bells, the shouts of drivers, the cracking whips, the sunshine, the color, the very dust itself, all added to the excitement of the hour. And as they made their way through the throng, it was again as it had been that first Sunday at the Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto, heads turned and exclamations were uttered when Pepita went by. And somehow it seemed that José was better known than even he himself had imagined, he received so many greetings. The truth was that already those who had seen the girl had spoken of her among themselves and to others, their readily fired Spanish natures aflame and elate. And those who had not seen, but only heard of her, were in as susceptible a condition as the more fortunate ones. She had been graphically and dramatically described again and again, so that by many a one she was recognized as "the pretty sister of José."

That was what they called her—"the pretty sister of José." She heard it half a dozen times, but never once even so much as lifted her long lashes. She was so used to admiration that it was as if they spoke of some one else, and it moved her not in the least, as she sat watching the bulls, to know that bold or languishing eyes dwelt upon her face, and that efforts were being constantly made to attract her attention.

It was a magnificent day—every one said so; there were splendid bulls and splendid dresses, and the fighters were in superb condition. The people were in good spirits too—the little breeze tempering the heat had, perhaps, something to do with it. Everything pleased them; they applauded wildly, and uttered shouts of encouragement and delight to bulls and toreadors alike. The grand people were richly attired; beautiful ladies watched with excited eyes the bulls, wearing their colors in rosettes of satin and glittering tinsel; the thousands of waving, brilliantly hued fans fluttered like a swarm of butterflies; the music filled the air. Pe-» pita sat in a dream of joy, the color coming and going on her cheeks, her rapture glowing in her eyes. She was a Spanish girl, and not so far in advance of

her age that the terrible features of the pastime going on before her could obscure its brilliancy and excitement. Truth to tell, she entirely forgot Sebastiano, not even recognizing him in the pageant of the grand entry, she was so absorbed in its glitter and blaze of color. But at the killing of the bull, that was different. Just a moment before she had awakened to the fact that Manuel was near her—near enough to speak. He had been staring at her, and growing more restless every moment, until he had at last attracted the attention of José and Jovita, and his first words to her came amid shouts of applause and delight.

"Sebastiano," he said; "it is Sebastiano." Pepita turned to look. With what a proud and careless air he advanced; with what a strong, light step; how he held his head and shoulders; how his gold and silver garnishings glittered; how the people called to him with a sort of caressing ecstasy! They adored him; he was their idol. Yes, there was a thrill in it, even for her cold heart. She felt a quick pulsation. To be so proud and triumphant and daring—to be the central point of everything—to be able to awake this exultant fervor—was something after all. And he was beautiful too, though she cared nothing for that, except as she could see that it added to his triumphs and made them more complete. His athletic grace of bearing, his dark, spirited face, with its passionate Andalusian eyes, their shadows intensified by the close, long black lashes, the very arch of his foot, and superb movement of his limbs, would have set him apart from ordinary, less fortunate mortals; but to have all this and be also the demi-god of these impassioned people, it must be worth living for. If one cared for men, if one did not find them tiresome, if one was simple enough—like Sarita—to be carried away by things, there was at least something in all this to interest one a little.

"It is Sebastiano," said José.

But Sebastiano was addressing the president of the games.

But Sebastiano was addressing the president of the games. He extended his glittering sword, and made his announcement in a clear, rich voice.

Pepita listened as he spoke. And then the most thrilling excitement of the sport began. It was no child's play Sebastiano had before him. The fierce black bull glaring at him with bent head and fiery eyes, uttering low, muttering bellowings of rage as he tore at the earth, throwing up the dust in a cloud, was a foe worthy of his mettle. He was a bull with vicious points and treacherous ones. Already goaded to fury by the play of the picadors and banderilleros, he must be watched, studied, excited, baffled; not one of his movements must be lost, or even regarded as trifling; wariness, quickness, magnificent daring, the subtlest forethought, all were needed. What play it was! what a match between brute cunning, power, and ferocity, and human courage, adroitness, and calculation! The brilliant, graceful figure was scarcely a moment in repose; it leaped and darted, the bright cloak waving, inviting, the bright sword glittering in the sun—it toyed with death and peril, evading both with an exultant grace and swiftness marvellous to behold, and rousing the on-lookers to shouts of joy and triumph. Even old Jovita wakened to a touch of fire which seemed like a renewal of her long-past youth. José and Manuel joined their cries with the rest. Pepita felt again—yes, more than once—that sudden throb and thrill.

And when at last the end was reached, with what a superb spring the last splendid blow was given! No need of a second; the bull staggered, shuddered, fell forward upon his knees, sank upon his side. Sebastiano stood erect, a brilliant, careless, triumphant figure again, the air resounding with deafening applause.

"You have seen him," cried Manuel to Pepita—"you have seen Sebastiano?"

"Yes," she answered, a little breathlessly, "I have seen him."

And even as she spoke she knew that he had seen her; she knew it even before Manuel spoke again in great excitement.

"He looks this way—he looks at us—at you."

It was quite true. Something had attracted his attention to the tier of seats in which they sat, some cry—who knows what?—perhaps some subtle magnetic influence. He turned his head with a quick movement, and

his eyes fell and fastened themselves instantly upon the brilliant little face glowing like some bright flower among those humbler and less blooming.

"He looks at you, Pepita," said José.

"He looks at you and at Jovita," Pepita answered. And she laughed and turned her face away.

But not before Sebastiano had seen it well. It was Fate. Yes, he knew that. He had been loved often; he had had romantic adventures, but it had always been he who had received and the others who had given; he had always remained Sebastiano, the hero, the adored. And now he stood and looked at a little head half concealed by a fan, and forgot for a moment where he was, and that the people were still shouting their applause in deafening tumult.

CHAPTER II.

Pepita and the others, Manuel with them, ended their gala-day with still another festivity. They dined together at a little café, and heard the bull-fight fought over again by those around them. At a table near them sat three chulos, who talked together in voices loud enough to be heard throughout their meal. And it was of Sebastiano they spoke, giving dramatic recitals of his daring deeds, telling each other of what he had done, of what he could do, and that Madrid had never seen his rival or peer. And then his conquests. It was true that noble ladies—beautiful and noble—had sent him messages and tokens. Gonsalvo, who was his intimate friend, could tell many things if he chose. Sebastiano had brilliant triumphs. Once he had even been in great danger because the woman who loved and sought him was of such rank that her relatives would have resorted to the stiletto rather than allow her infatuation to continue.

"But it is said truly that he had no love for her—that he has little for any of them," said one. "They run after him too much, these women."

"But there was one to-day—" began one of the others. "I heard it of Alfonso—he saw her at the bull-fight—Sebastiano—and tried to find out —"

He made a movement at this moment which brought Pepita directly within his view. She had been hidden from him before by the figure of Jovita. He stopped with his wine untasted and stared at her. A moment later he bent forward and spoke in a lower tone to his companions, who turned to look also. Alfonso had pointed her out to him as she left the Plaza de Toros, and he had recognized her again.

"The little one is there," was what he said, "behind you. He asked if any of us had seen her before; if we knew her name."

Pepita did not hear him, and did not know that from that hour they would all know her, or that at least there would be few of them who did not. For Sebastiano to show an interest in a woman, to even go so far as to

ask her name, was such a new thing that it must be spoken of and attract attention to her. And that she was not a fine lady, but only a pretty unknown girl with a rose in her hair, made the matter all the more exciting. When she fell asleep, tired and happy, that night, already she was on the road to fame. Sebastiano, who was the adored of his order, who in spite of his adventures sought no woman, had asked her name, had made efforts to discover it, and had learned that among those who had had the good fortune to see and speak to her she was known as "the pretty sister of José." A week from this time José came home one evening bringing Manuel with him. Manuel was often with him—in fact he had many friends; almost every day some gay or grave young fellow managed to attach himself to him, and somehow the acquaintance always shared itself soon afterward with Pepita. But Manuel appeared oftener than the rest, having a timid obstinacy, and seeming only puzzled and not discouraged by the indifference which sometimes ignored his very existence. On this particular evening he was moved from his usual calm, and so was José. They had seen Sebastiano; they had spoken to him; in the presence of a circle of his friends and admirers he had drunk wine with them. "We were passing the wine-shop and we saw him," explained Manuel, "and we went in to look on a little and hear him talk. One of the chulos who stood near spoke to him quickly when he saw us—as if he knew us—and presently the same chulo came and spoke to José, and soon Sebastiano came and spoke too. The one who approached us first was one of the three who drank at the table near us on the evening after the bull-fight. Once, in his boyhood, Sebastiano lived near the village you left; he knew Padre Alejandro and some others; he was pleased to see José and speak of them —it was as if they were friends at once."

"He has a good heart," put in José; "they all say that of him. He remembered everything—even old Juan, who lived to be a hundred and was bent double. He asked if he lived yet. It seems strange that he was once so near us, and was a little lad, ill-used and poor. He is not too proud to remember it. He would be a good friend to one in trouble—Sebastiano —though he is rich and spoken of by the whole world."

So great a celebrity José was convinced must be known to the entire universe. That night, as Pepita made ready for her bed, old Jovita, who had already retired, lay and looked at her.

The girl stood in the flood of brilliant white moonlight which bathed part of the bare room; her round dimpled arms were lifted as she unwound the soft dusky coils of her hair, to which there yet clung a few stars of jasmine. There was the shadow of a smile on her lips, and she was humming a tune.

"What does he want with José—this Sebastiano?" said Jovita, grumblingly.

"Who knows?" said Pepita.

"He wants something," Jovita went on. "They don't make friends with those beneath them for nothing, these fine ones. They all talk of you, these foolish fellows, and he has heard, and makes friends so that he can see you."

"What do they say of me?" asked

Pepita, without deigning to look up.

"Men are all fools," grumbled Jovita; "and they think girls are fools too. They say you have a pretty face; and he thinks he can make a fool of you if you are not one."

"Does he?" said Pepita, with a dimpling cruel little smile. "Let him come to-morrow—to-night. Let him begin."

"He will begin soon enough," Jovita answered. "You will see. Be sure he does not play the old game with you as he did with Sarita."

Pepita shook the small stray blossoms out of her hair.

Pepita shook the small stray blossoms out of her hair and began to retwist the coil, breaking into singing in a clear voice:

"White, white is the jasmine flower;

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Let its stars light thee
Here to my casement,
Where I await thee.
White, white is the jasmine flower,
Sweet, sweet is the heart of the rose,
Sweet my mouth's blossom—"
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She stopped short and dropped her arms.

"See," she said, "let him want what he will, let him come a thousand times, and I will never speak to him."

In the gardens the next Sunday they met him. Pepita was talking to a young girl whose name was Isabella, and whose brother. Juan was following in the footsteps of Manuel and the rest. It was Isabella who first saw the matador, and uttered an exclamation.

"Your brother is coming," she cried, "with—yes, with Sebastiano."

José's simple face was on fire with delight, but Sebastiano looked less gay, and his step was less carelessly buoyant than it had been in the bull-ring. As he approached the group he looked only at Pepita. But Pepita looked only at José, her eyes laughing.

"Jovita is cross," she said; "she has been asking for you. She wishes to go home."

Sebastiano's eyes were fastened upon her face, upon her red lips, as she spoke. He had heard that she was like this; that she gave her glances to no man; that she was prettier than the rose in bloom, and as cruel as a young hawk, and his heart beat as he found himself near to her. Since the hour he had seen her he had thought only of how he might see her again, of how he might find her. He had made one bold plan after another, and had been forced to abandon each of them, and then mere chance had thrown José in his path. And now the instant he approached her she was about to elude him.

He spoke a few hurried words to José. It was too early to go away; the pleasure of the day was scarcely at its height; he wished to entertain them; they must not go.

"I will go and speak to Jovita," said José, and he went, leaving the four together.

The two simpler ones were somewhat abashed by the splendor of the dashing figure; they gazed at it with mingled curiosity and joy. To be so near it was enough, without effort at conversation. Sebastiano moved to Pepita's side. A Spanish lover loses little time.

"I saw you," he said, "at the bull-fight."

Pepita looked over his shoulder and smiled at a passing woman who had greeted her. Her face dimpled, and she showed her small white teeth. It was as if she did not see the matador at all.

"It was at the bull-fight," he persisted. "Two weeks ago. You had a red flower in your hair, as you have to-day. Ever since—"

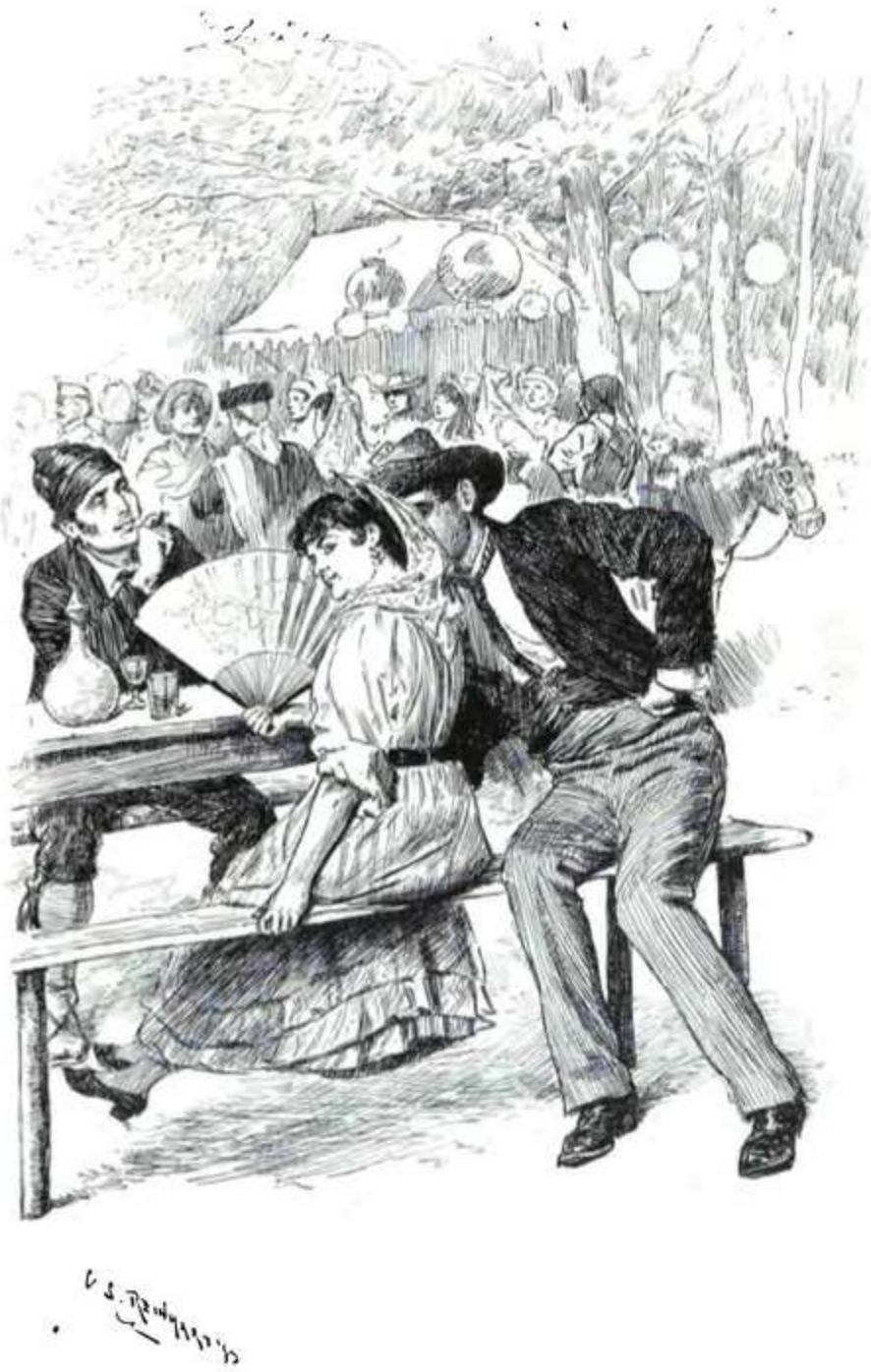
"It was not true," Pepita said gayly, to Isabella, "what I said of Jovita. She is always cross, but she does not wish to go home. She met an old woman she knew in her young days, and is enjoying herself very much."

"Why did you say it?" asked Isabella, with simple wonder.

"Because I wished to go home myself."

"Truly!" said Isabella. "Why is that?"

"I am not entertained so much to-day," answered Pepita.



"We will make it more amusing," said Sebastiano, eagerly.

"We will make it more amusing," said Sebastiano, eagerly. "It shall be more amusing—"

"There is Jovita with her old woman now," interrupted Pepita. "I will go and speak to them."

She was gone the next instant—her movement was like the flight of a bird. Sebastiano stood and stared after her in silence until Juan addressed him respectfully.

"She is very wonderful," he said. "She changes her mind before one knows. Just before you came she said she was amused, and wished to remain."

"Perhaps," began Sebastiano, much discomforted—"perhaps it was I—"

"Ah, senor," said Juan, with great politeness, "never. It is said that she always does what she chooses, and she chooses to do a thousand things."

"That is because she is so pretty," said Isabella. "She is so much prettier than all the others, and she does not care."

"A woman who is so pretty as that," remarked Juan, sententiously, "need not care."

"She says," put in Isabella, "that if she does not care, others will; but if she should care, the others—" She stopped, meeting Sebastiano's eyes and becoming a little confused.

"What would happen then," he said, "if she should care?"

"I do not know," said Isabella; "but she never will—never."

But if she changed often toward others, Sebastiano found no change in her mood toward him. They did not leave the gardens until late in the day. Jovita was enjoying too greatly the comradeship of her old woman, and was ready to enjoy any pleasure offered to her. Sebastiano had a full purse, and perhaps understood old women of Jovita's class. He made himself very agreeable to these two, finding them the most comfortable seats and supplying them with things good to eat and drink, over which they gossiped together, leaving the young ones to amuse themselves as they pleased. They were very gay, the younger ones; even Manuel, elated by the presence and hospitalities of Sebastiano, made little jokes. But none of them were gayer than Pepita. She was the centre figure of the party; they

all looked at her, listened to her, were led by her slightest caprice. They went here and there, did this or that, because she wished it. It was Sebastiano who was the host of the hour, but by instinct each knew it was Pepita who was the chief guest—who must be pleased.

"Is she pleased?" the matador asked José once in a low-toned aside. "Does she not entertain herself?"

"Does she not say so?" answered José, with some slight secret misgiving.

"I do not know," said Sebastiano, looking down. "She does not speak to me."

José pushed his hat aside and rubbed his forehead. His respect for Pepita's whims had begun early in life and was founded on experience.

"She is young," he faltered—"she is very young. When she enjoys herself she—"

He paused with an uneasy movement of his shoulders. It was quite terrible to him that she should treat with such caprice and disdain so splendid and heroic a person; but he knew there was nothing to be done.

"She admires you," he said, with courageous mendacity. "She saw you at the bullfight."

"She will be there again? You will take her—the next time?" said Sebastiano.

"Yes," answered José. "She has asked that I will. It was the greatest pleasure of her life."

But it was true that during all the afternoon she had never once spoken to Sebas-tiano. She had been as gay as a young bird, and the spirit of the party, her laughter, her pretty mockeries and sauciness, had carried all before them. Manuel had been reduced to hopeless slavery. Isabella had looked on in secret reverential wonder. Jovita's old woman had glanced aside again and again, nodding her head, and saying, sagely: "Yes, she will always have it her own way—the little one. You are lucky in having such a grandchild. She will never be a load." But throughout it all Pepita had

managed it that not one of her words had fallen directly to Sebastiano. If he spoke to her, she gave her answer to the one nearest to him. If he did not put an actual question to her, she replied merely with a laugh or a piquant grimace or gesture, which included all the rest. It was worse than coldness. To the others it was perhaps not perceptible at all; only he who searched for her eyes, who yearned and strove to meet them, knew that they never rested upon him for an instant.

And then when he so daringly arranged that José should invite him to return home with them, to what did it all come? He was lured to old Jovita's side by the fact that at the beginning of the walk Pepita kept near her, and no sooner had the old woman involved him in tiresome talk, from which he could not escape, than the small figure flitted away and ended the journey homeward under the wing of José, and accompanied by Manuel and a certain gay little Carlos, who joked and laughed like a child.

And when after they arrived, and the moon rose, and they sat under the vines, though there was gayety and laughter, he knew, as before, that in some mysterious manner he was excluded from it, though he seemed the honored and distinguished guest. Carlos, who sat near some shrubs in bloom, made a little wreath of white flowers, and as she played and sang to her guitar, Pepita wore it on her head. Then Manuel, not to be outdone, wove a garland of pink oleander, and she threw it about her throat and sang on. Sebastiano forgot at last to speak, and could only sit and look at her. He could see and hear nothing else. It was almost the same thing with the rest, for that matter. She was somehow the centre figure round which they all seemed to have gathered, as she sat there playing, a night breeze sometimes stirring the soft ruffled hair on her forehead, which was like black floss silk; and whatsoever she sang, however passionate and tender the wild little song, however passionate and tender her voice, her young eyes had mockery in them—mocked at the words, the tenderness of her own voice, and at those who were moved by it; and most of all Sebastiano knew that she mocked at himself.

But he could not go away. Some strange thing had happened to him, it seemed; it was as if a spell had fallen upon him.

Better to be mocked than to go away. He stayed so late that Jovita fell asleep and nodded under the shadow of the grape-vines. And at last Pepita put down her guitar and rose. She stood upright in the moonlight, and extended her pretty arms and stretched them, laughing.

"Good-night," she said. "Jovita will amuse you. Already there have been too many hours in this day."

She ran into the house with no other adieu than a wave of her hand, and the next minute they could hear her singing in her room, and knew she was going to bed.

Sebastiano rose slowly.

"Good-night," he said to José.

Manuel and Carlos said good-night also, and went out together, walking side by side down the white moonlit road; but Sebas-tiano moved away from the shadowing vines with a lingering step, and José went with him a short distance. Something in his hero's air of gravity and abstraction somewhat overawed him.

"She has not been entertained," said Sebastiano at last.

"Yes, yes," said José. "She has had pleasure all the day. And she is fond of pleasure."

"She said there had been too many hours in the day."

José rubbed his head a little reflectively for a moment, and then his countenance somewhat brightened.

"She wished to lie a little for amusement," he said, affectionately. "There is no wrong in her—Pepita—but sometimes, to be amused, she will tell a little lie without sin in it, because she knows we understand her. She does not expect us to believe. We who are used to her know her better. You will also understand in time."

"Then I may come again?" asked Sebas-tiano.

The heavy body of José almost trembled with simple pleasure.

"It is all yours, senor," he said, with a gesture including the little house and all the grape-vines and orange blossoms and oleanders. "It is poor and small, but it is yours—and we—"

Sebastiano's dark eyes rested for an instant on a little window under the eaves where a jasmine vine wreathed a thick tangle of green, starred with white flowers. And as he looked a voice broke through the fragrant barrier singing a careless, broken bit of song—

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"White, white is the jasmine flower;
Let its stars light thee."
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"It is Pepita," said José. "She always sings when she is pleased. It is always a good sign."

If her singing was a sign of pleasure, then she must have been enjoying her life greatly in the days that came afterward, for she was singing continually. As she went about her work there was always the shadow of a smile on her lips and in her eyes, as if her thoughts amused her. And she was in such gay spirits that José was enchanted. He had only one vague source of trouble: all the rest had turned out so well! It had all occurred just as he had dreamed, but scarcely dared to hope, in those by-gone days when he had been hard-worked and ill-fed and ill-clad. He had a good place, and what seemed by comparison incredibly good wages. He had the nice little house, and Pepita had holiday garments as gay and pretty as any other girl, and looked, when dressed in them, gayer and ten times prettier than all the rest.

That was what he had looked forward to most of all, and his end was attained. And when he walked out with her, all the young fellows who were allowed to come near—and many who were not—fell in love. Yes, it was true; he saw it himself and heard it on every side. It would take the fingers of both hands to count those who were frankly enamoured, beginning with Carlos and Manuel. But it was at this point that the vague trouble came in. And it was Pepita herself who caused it, by her treatment of her adorers. To say that she dealt out scorn to them would be to say too much; she simply dealt out nothing—and less. They might come and go; they might follow and gaze and sigh—she did not even deign to seem to know they did so, unless by chance one became too pertinacious, and then she merely

transfixed him with a soft, cruelly smiling eye. "She will not marry any of them," said José to Jovita in bewilderment.

"That will come soon enough," said Jovita. "She is pretty, and it makes her a little fool—all girls are like that; but one of these days you may look out—it will be all over. She is just the one to blaze up all at once."

"I do not think she is a fool like other girls," said José, with gravity. "But she does not seem to care about love; she does not seem to know. She is not even sorry for them when they are miserable." He did not consider himself when he thought of her marriage; in truth he put himself in the background, for if some other man filled her life and her heart his vocation would be gone, and there would be some dull hours for him before he could become used to it. But he had an innocent feeling that without this love, of which all men talked so much, the life he wished to be bright would not be quite complete. She was too pretty and too good never to be married—never to have a home of her own and some fine fellow to love the dust she walked on. He himself was only José, and a brother was, after all, a poor substitute for a lover who could talk and sing and make jokes, and wear such a dashing air that she would be proud of him.

"That is it," he said, sagely, to himself. "A woman must have some one to be proud of, and she could never be proud of me. If I were Sebastiano now, it would be different."

He stopped suddenly and rubbed his head, as his habit was when he was startled or confused, and his face became rather red. Perhaps this was because he remembered that among all the rest, the magnificent, the illustrious, the beautiful Sebastiano was the one to whom she showed least grace. In fact it was almost mysterious, her manner toward him. They had seen him often—he had come in many evenings to sit under the vines; when they went out for pleasure it somehow happened that they nearly always met him; but when he joined them Pepita became at once possessed of some strange wilful spirit. Upon reflection José found that he had never yet heard her speak to him: it appeared to him as he thought it over that she always by some device avoided answering directly what he said to her.

"That is a strange thing," said José, deeply mystified, as he suddenly realized this, "when one remembers how he can slay a bull. There is no one else who can slay a bull as he can. It is enough to make one weep for joy. And yet she can treat him ill."

But he did not know how ill; only Sebas-tiano knew that. Since the day he had stood in the arena and had seen all in a moment, as if a star had suddenly started into the sky, the small black head and rose of a face, he had lived in a fevered dream—a dream in which he pursued always something which seemed within his grasp and yet forever eluded him. What had he cared for all the rest of the women? Nothing. It had confused and angered him when they had thrown themselves in his way or sent him offerings, and when he had been told of this or that beauty who was in love with his proud, bearing and dashing courage. Women! What were women? He had only cared for the bulls, for the clamor of the people, and the wild excitement of the arena. All he had wished for was to learn the best stroke, the finest leap. But this girl, who had never opened her scornful little mouth to deign him a word—who had never once allowed him to look in her eyes—somehow this one drove him half mad. He could think of nothing else; he forgot even the bulls; he spent all the day and sometimes all the night in devising plans to entrap her into speaking, to force her to look at him. How obstinate she was! How she could elude him, as if by some magic!

What had he not done that he might be near her? He had followed her everywhere. José did not know that she scarcely ever went out without his following and speaking to her. He used to spring up by her side as if he had risen out of the earth, but after the first two or three times he never succeeded in making her start or show any feeling whatever.

But that first time, and even the second, she had started. The first time she had gone to the old well for water, and as she stood resting in the shade a moment he appeared With a bouquet of beautiful strange flowers in his hand.

"God be with you!" he said, and laid the flowers down a moment and drew the water for her.

She watched him draw it, smiling just a little.

"It will be a fine day for the bull-fight," he said, when her jar was filled.

She put her hand up and shaded her working eyes as she looked at the blue sky, but she said nothing.

"Do you go to-day to the Plaza de Toros?" he asked. "You shall have good places—the best. They are good bulls to-day, black Andalusians, fierce and hard to manage. There will be fine sport. You will go?"

She leaned against the side of the well.

She leaned against the side of the well and looked down into the water, where she could see her face reflected in the cool, dark depths. The next moment Sebastiano's was reflected also. He held the flowers in his hand.

"These!" he said. "It was one of the gardeners of the king who gave them to me. They are such as the queen sometimes wears. I brought them that you might wear them at the bull-fight."

She saw their beauty reflected in the water. She would not look at them directly. They were very beautiful. She had never seen such flowers. And the queen herself had worn others like them. If any one else had brought them—but it was Sebastiano. And she remembered Sarita. Perhaps he had at some time given some to Sarita, knowing that to a country girl who knew nothing they would seem very grand. Sarita would have been sure to take them.

A wicked little look came into her face. She turned as if to take up her water jar. But Sebastiano laid his hand upon it.

"You will not speak," he said passionately. "No; nor even look at the flowers I bring you. You shall tell me at least what I have done. Come, now. Am I a devil? What is it?"

She put her hands behind her back and fixed her great eyes upon him for a moment. He could not say now that she had not looked at him. He thought he could keep her, did he, when she did not choose to stay? She, Pepita! She stood there staring at him for a moment, and then turned about and walked off, leaving him with her water jar. Let him stand and watch over it all day if he would.

She went back to the house and called Jovita.

"If you want your water now," she said, "you will have to go to the well for it. It is drawn, and Senor Sebastiano is taking care of it."

"Mother of God!" said Jovita, staring, "she is mad with her Senor Sebastiano."

But not another word could she gain, and before she could reach the well she met a boy carrying the water jar toward the house, and was told that he had been paid to bring it.

They went to the bull-fight; and, as Pepita sat among the rest, out-blooming the red flower in her hair, she heard it said that Sebastiano had

never before been so magnificent, had never shown such daring and dexterity.

"He looks at Pepita," said Isabella to Carlos. "When he entered, his eyes found her before he saw anything else."

Yes, he saw Pepita, and Pepita sat and watched him with as cool an interest as if the peril with which he played meant nothing. Her lovely eyes glowed under their drooping lashes, but it was only with a momentary excitement caused by the fierce sport; the man was nothing.

So it seemed at least to Sebastiano. It was a bad bull he encountered, savage and treacherous, and maddened by his rage. Once there was a moment when a shadow of a misstep would have cost him his life. There was no time to look at Pepita then, but when the danger was passed and he glanced toward her, she was softly waving her fan and smiling up at Manuel as if she had not even seen.

"She has a bad heart," he said to himself, with fierce impatience. "It is not nature that a young girl should mock at everything, and be so cruel, and have neither feeling nor even a little fear. She has a bad heart, or none at all."

He would not look at her again; he swore it to himself. And for a short time he kept his vow; but there came a moment when something, some irresistible feeling, conquered him. It was as if he must look—as if some magic forced him, drew his eyes toward her in spite of himself. And when he had looked, a sharp shock thrilled him, for she herself was looking at him; her eyes were fixed upon him with a strange steadiness, as if perhaps they had been resting upon him for some minutes and she had forgotten herself. It was a little thing perhaps, but it was enough for his hot blood and swift-veering impulsive nature. He had just given the final stroke; he was panting, glowing. The people were shouting, rising in their seats, and repeating his name with caressing, applauding epithets attached to it. Chance had brought him near the seat in which she sat, with Jovita and José and the others near her. They were applauding with the rest, all but Pepita, who only sat and smiled. And in the midst of it Sebastiano made a swift movement, so swift that it was scarcely to be understood—a mere touch of the hand to the shoulder—and something bright, like a many-

hued bird, flew over the barrier and fell upon Pepita's lap. It was the knot of gay, rich ribbon which a moment before the matador had worn.

"It is the *devisa!*" exclaimed Isabella, in an awestruck tone.

"It is his *devisa*," cried José—"his *devisa*, Pepita. He has thrown it to you yourself—Sebastiano."

The next moment he was struck dumb with amazement. Pepita sat upright and broke into a little laugh. She lightly waved her fan.

"Why did he not throw it to Jovita?" she said, and with a cruel, careless little movement she swept the *devisa* from her knee; it fell, and she set her foot upon it.

"She has trodden upon it," said old Jovita. "She has done it for pride, and to show herself above others. She is ready for the devil. Some one should beat her."

"It was the *devisa*," gasped José. "Sebastiano."

Pepita left her seat. It seemed as if something strange must have happened to her. The crimson had leaped to her cheeks, and her eyes were ablaze.

"What is it to me, his *devisa?*" she said. "I do not want it. I will not have it. Let him throw a thousand, and I will tread upon them all, one after the other. Let it lie in the dirt. Let him give it to those others, those women who want it—and him." She would go home at once; not to the pleasure-gardens, not anywhere but back to the cottage; and José followed her meekly, struck dumb. He had seen her wilful, capricious, childishly passionate, a little hard to understand, many times before, but never like this. What had occurred to her? What had Sebastiano done?

Jovita had picked up the knot of gay ribbon and brushed the dust off it, and carried it home with her, grumbling fiercely. She was never averse to grumbling a little, and here, the saints knew, was cause.

"For pride," she kept repeating; "for pride, and to show that others are beneath her! Mother of God! the king himself is not good enough for her! Let him come and pray upon his knees that she will go to the palace and

wear a crown, and he will see what she will say! It is these fools of men who spoil her, as if there had never been a pretty face before. Let them treat her as she treats them, and she will be humble enough. She was always one of the devil's children with her pride!"

But Pepita, who heard it all, said nothing, though once or twice she gave her little mocking laugh.

CHAPTER III.

By the time Pepita had reached home her mood had changed—her anger was gone, or at least the signs of it were. She sang as she prepared the supper, and chatted gayly with José. It appeared that, after all, she had enjoyed the bull-fight; it had even been better than the others; she had had great pleasure. She made delightful little jests about everything; she recounted the names of the people she had seen and known; she described to him the dresses of the girls, the airs and graces of the men. She laughed, and obliged José to laugh also, and all the time she looked so pretty, with the queer light in her eyes, the gleam of her little wicked white teeth, and the brilliant spot of color on her cheeks, that she was enough to turn one's head.

The moon was at its brightest that night. All the earth was bathed in pure, magic whiteness—the whiteness which somehow seems to bring perfume and stillness and mysterious tenderness with it. Such a night! One breathed roses and orange blossoms and jasmine. Pepita sat under the roses and sang and talked, and José smoked and was happy, but still in a state of bewilderment, though the stillness and beauty of the night soothed him and made him content to ruminate without words.

Jovita fell asleep. She always fell asleep out-of-doors on the warm summer nights, and in-doors by the fire when it was winter. Pepita ceased to talk, and sang one little song after another; then she even ceased to sing, and only touched her guitar softly now and then. After a while José, who had stretched himself upon a bench, fell asleep also.

Pepita ceased to touch her guitar. She looked out at the flowers sleeping in the moonlight, and for a few minutes was very still; then she laid the guitar down and stepped out into the brightness.

In the light of the moon one cannot see the color in a face. Perhaps this was why hers seemed to be gone. She looked quite pale, and her lovely little brows were drawn together until they made a black line across her forehead. She clasped her hands behind her head, and with her face a little

thrown back, so that the light fell full upon it, wandered out among the trees and fragrant flowering things. She liked the jasmine best, and over one part of the low, rough wall there climbed one which blossomed with a myriad stars. So she went and stood by it, and looked now at it, now up and down the road, which the moon had made into a path of snow.

And as she stood there, suddenly there started up on the other side of the wall the figure she knew so well, and the next moment it had vaulted over and was close to her. Sebastiano!

She stood still, her hands still clasped behind her head, her face still upturned, and looked at him.

She clasped her hands behind her head.

He folded his arms and looked at her. As for him, whether the moonlight was to blame or not, he was as pale as death.

"Yes," he said, "you are always the same. You do not change. One may come at any hour. But listen to me. You think I have come to reproach you. Why should I? I have fought bulls, but that does not teach men how to deal with women. I thought that, if a man gave you his soul and his life and the breath of his body, you would listen some day and let him think of you. You are a woman, and you are made to be loved; but there is something hard in your heart. You are proud of having mocked a man who was honest and loved you. But hear me: it is better, after all, to be less pretty and more a woman."

He stopped an instant. She had changed her position, and stood by the jasmine, stripping the blossoms from it one by one. She began to smile and sing softly, as if to herself:

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"Oh, bird at my window,
Sing but one song to me,
My lover who is light and gay."
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"And more a woman," said Sebastiano. "It is women men want."

Pepita looked up and laughed; then she sang again:

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"Who stirs the blossoms in the night,
Who breaks the orange flower."
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Sebastiano made a swift movement and caught her wrists, his eyes flashing fire.

"That is nothing," he said. "You are woman enough. The time will come. It will not be always like this. You can be *made* to love. Yes, you are one of those who must be *made*. Then you will suffer too, and it will be good for you. You will speak then."

He paused a moment, and held her arms a little apart, looking at her with a sudden change to mournfulness.

"How pretty you are!" he said. "How little and how pretty! If you were good and gentle, and one might touch your cheek softly or stroke your hair, how one would love and serve you! No, you cannot move. I have not fought bulls for nothing. If I let you move you will struggle and hurt yourself. Listen. I am going away. I will trouble you no more now. I will

wait. If one waits long enough, pain ceases and one forgets. It is so with a wound, why not with what one feels for a woman? I said you could be *made* to love; but let that be left for another man to do. I want no love like that. I want a woman. Some day you will not cast the *devisa* under your feet. You will take it and hide it in your breast. It will not be mine, but some other man's who loves you less. I loved you, I was mad for you; but it shall cease. It is better to think only of the bulls than to play the fool for a woman who has no love in her heart. You are pretty, but that is not everything. You can work spells, but a man can break through them. There! Go!"

He gave her one long look, flung her hands aside, and had vaulted the wall and was gone himself one moment later.

Pepita stood still with clinched hands dropped at her side, staring with wide fierce eyes down the white moonlit road.

The next evening José came home from his work later than usual. He came down the road with a drooping head and a slow and heavy step. When he sat down to his food he ate but little, and as he bent over his soup he heard Jovita scolding.

"It is gone," she was saying. "You took it, and have thrown it away."

"Was it not mine?" said Pepita. "It was mine. I cared nothing for it, and have done what I chose with it."

José lifted his head and listened.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"She has thrown away the *devisa*, which I had saved," answered Jovita. "I laid it away, and she has taken it. What harm did it do her that it should lie out of her sight in peace?"

"Did you do that?" José said to Pepita.

"Was it meant for her?" said Pepita. "I told you he ought to have thrown it to her and not to me."

José broke a piece of bread and crumbled it on the table mechanically.

"You need not have done that," he said. "I wish you had left it in its place. It did no hurt, and we shall not see him again. He is not coming any more. And soon he goes away; and who knows what may happen?"

Pepita walked out of the house without speaking. She did not come back for a long time, and they did not know where she had gone; but as that was her way when she was in a naughty humor, they were not anxious about her.

When she returned at last the moon was shining again, and Jovita was asleep in the shadow of the vines, and José sat on the bench outside the door, smoking.

Pepita sat down on the threshold and rested her head against the side of the door.

Pepita sat down on the threshold and rested her head against the side of the door. She said nothing at all, and only looked out at the dew-laden flowers sparkling in the garden.

There was silence for several minutes, and then José turned uneasily and spoke.

"Yes," he said, "he will not come again; and soon he goes away. It is for the best. He is very strong and determined. Perhaps that comes of fighting bulls. He said he wanted you, but you did not want him, so he must forget about you. He must cease to think of you or hear of you. He asked me as a friend not to let him see me for a while, until it was over. To see me would remind him of you, and that would not do. He asked it as a friend—there was no unkind-ness—he is my friend, yes, though he is Sebastiano and I am only a poor fellow who works hard. It will all be as well as ever between us when it is all done with and we meet again. If you had wanted him we should have been brothers."

Pepita sat still. What strange thing had happened to her? She did not know. Something was the matter with her breathing. Something hurt her side—labored in it with heavy beatings like blows which suffocated her. She shut her hands and drove the nails into her palms. She could not have spoken for the world.

Before José could say more she rose with fierce suddenness, and passed him and was gone again.

The poor fellow looked after her small swift form mournfully.

"If she had wanted him," he said, "he would have made her a good husband, and we should have been brothers. But she is not easy to please, and she would not give one a chance who did not please her at first. And there is no one who slays a bull as he does!"

Pepita flew like a bird until she reached the low wall where the jasmine grew, at the spot where she had stood the night before. There she stopped, panting. The breath of the jasmine filled all the air about her. She looked up the white road.

A strange new passion filled her. She did not know whether it was anger or not, but if it was anger it was of a new kind, with more pain in it than she was used to. He would not come again—not at all again! He would not appear at her side as if he had sprung from the earth; he would not follow her or plead with her, or look at her every moment he was near her; he

would not try to make her speak. Only last night he was here in this very spot, and now he would never speak like that again. He would forget her, not care for her—forget her, Pepita.

She would not believe it. She knew he could not—they never did; they always loved her best and wanted no one else. And still the labored throbbing went on in her side and she panted for breath.

"Come back," she cried, looking up the white road. "I tell you to come back. You shall. Do you hear? I tell you—I—Pepita!"

But there was no answer, no sound of any footstep, no sign of any advancing shadow. The road stretched out its white length in utter solitude, and a strange, wild look came into her beautiful little face.

"Do you not hear?" she persisted. "I will not speak to you if you do come; I will give you nothing; I will not look at you; but you shall come because I will it—because I am Pepita."

Still there was only silence and loneliness. Suddenly she flung out her hands and stamped her foot.

"I will kill you," she said. "If you do not come—I will kill you!"

Then almost immediately she put her clinched hand to her beating side and sank down upon the earth, burying her face in the dew-wet fragrant tangle of the jasmine.

But he did not come back. And yet every night she went and stood by the low wall, and looked up the white road and watched and waited. For a long time she did not know what she intended to do if he should appear. All was vague in her mind. At first it seemed only as if her whole being went out into the fierce demand that he should come, and the obstinate proud belief that it must be as she wished—that he could not resist and disobey her. Who had ever disobeyed her? Not José; not Jovita, for all her grumblings; not any of those others. And was it likely that he who had adored her more than all the rest, who had watched her with that hungry love in his eyes, could do what no other had ever done? She told herself this over and over again; but he did not come. She began to feel a feverish eagerness when she dressed herself, a passionate desire to be pretty—to be

prettier than ever before. She used to stand before her scrap of looking-glass to try on one bit of simple finery after another, twisting up the soft cloud of her hair afresh a dozen times a day, and putting a fresh flower in it. She went to the well again and again and filled her jar, and emptied and filled it again, and lingered, and tried not to look round when she heard a footstep; but the right one never came, though her heart's throbbing shook her many times in false alarm. She was only a child—a passionate Spanish child, ignorant and full of fierce young natural impulses—and she knew only childish, crude methods. So she made herself beautiful, and showed herself in the places where she thought he would see her and be unable to resist her will and her beauty; but though she made José take her here and there and everywhere, she never saw Sebastiano but once. It was in the Public Garden, where they had first met. They were sitting in the shade refreshing themselves with wine, and he came toward them, not at first seeing them. Pepita clutched her fan until she broke it, and a wild exultation sprang in her breast. She had seen before she left home that she had never before been so pretty.

There had come into her face a new look—a fire that had burned deeper every charm. He would see—he would see that she was Pepita still, and that he could not keep his word if she chose—if she chose.

He drew nearer and nearer, still not seeing them. He was talking to the three companions who were with him. He was richly dressed, and looked stronger than ever, and more handsome and graceful. He came still nearer. No, she would not speak to him. No! He looked up and his eye fell upon them—upon José and Jovita and Pepita! He drew back a step and stood still; he made a low bow to them, a grand bow, such as he made when he was in the bull-ring and the people applauded. He turned away and passed on. Yes, without a word.

Jose sighed a deep and mournful sigh and rose to his feet.

"Come," he said. "We must go. It is best not to stay. He does not wish to see us, and he asked that I would keep away. It is a pity—but he asked it."

The breath was coming in sharp little puffs through Pepita's delicate nostrils. It was as if she had been struck a blow. She walked home as in a

sort of delirium; she saw none of those who turned to look at her. She walked faster and faster. Jovita could not keep pace with her.

"What is the matter?" said the old woman. "You walk as if you had a devil in you. Your breath is all gone. Are you mad?"

At night, when they sat together, Pepita spoke of the next bull-fight. José must take her. She wished to go.

"It is better that we should not go there," said José. "You know why. He will not like to see you. You saw how it was to-day. He is not angry, only he is determined not to be reminded. Soon he will go away, and then you shall go with me as often as you wish; but not now. After this week he will be far away—far away."

"I will go now," said Pepita. "I will go without you if you will not take me. Isabella and Juan and Manuel will be glad enough. Let him—let him look at his bulls."

She did not know that it was desperation that had seized upon her; she thought it was defiance. Yes, yes, she told herself, breathlessly, he should see her laugh and talk with Manuel and Carlos and Juan and the rest; and then he would be punished.

She would hear nothing that José said. She would go—she would go. No other bull-fight but this would please her.

She could scarcely live until the day arrived. She had made for herself a new gala dress; she had a new fan and a necklace she had bought out of her little savings.

There was a great crowd. It was known that Sebastiano was to go away, and many had come for that reason, wishing to see him for the last time in the season.

At first Pepita was gayer than her adorers had ever seen her. She deigned to talk and smile and listen. She had the restlessness and color of some brilliant-winged bird. Isabella looked at her in wonder.

"She was never like this before," she whispered to Juan.

And then Sebastiano came, and for the time they saw only him.

When at last the bull lay an inert mass in the dust, and the people shouted and almost flung themselves from their places into the arena in their excitement, and the gay and superb actor bowed to them—bowed to them again and again—Pepita sat like a little image of stone. She was quite colorless, and her eyes were fixed. She seemed to hear and see nothing until some one spoke to her. Then she rose and looked at Manuel.

"It is too hot," she said, in a low voice not like her own. "I must go. The sun. I have a pain in my head. Come."

He had not lifted his eyes once to her. It was as if she had not lived—as if she had been Isabella or Carmenita—and he did not give her a thought. No, he had not once looked up.

The next day he was gone. She heard José say so to Jovita, who grumbled loudly. She had forgotten her old distaste for these "fine ones."

"And but for her humors he would have stayed," she said. "What more does she want than a fine well-built man like that—a man who is well-to-do, and whom every other girl would dance for joy to get? But no; nothing but a prince for her. Well, we shall see. She will work for her bread herself at last, and serve the other women who have homes and husbands."

In the middle of the night she was wakened from her slumbers by something—she knew not what. Soon she perceived it was Pepita, trembling.

"What is it now?" demanded the old woman.

"I stayed out in the dew too long," said Pepita, "and I am cold."

"That is well," said Jovita. "Get chilled through and have a fever, that we may ruin ourselves with doctors' bills; and all because you choose to remain in the night air when you should be asleep."

Pepita lay on her pillow, her eyes wide open in the darkness, her small hot hand clutching against her breast something she had hung round her neck by a bit of ribbon. It was the *devisa* she had stolen from Jovita, and which had not been thrown away at all. In the daytime it was hidden in the

bosom of her dress; at night it hung by a cord and her hand held it. By this time a sort of terror had mingled itself with her passion of anger and pain, and she lay trembling because she was saying to herself again and again:

"I am like Sarita! I am like Sarita!"

She said it to herself a thousand times in the weeks and months which followed, and which seemed to her helplessness like years. She said it in as many moods as there were hours of the day. Sometimes with wild unreasoning childish rage; sometimes with a shock of fear; sometimes in a frenzy of shame; sometimes, as she stood and looked up the road, her cheeks pale, her eyes dilated with self-pity and tears.

"I am like Sarita! Yes—Sarita!" She remembered with superstitious tremor all the things that had been said to her of the punishment that would fall upon her because of her hard-heartedness. She remembered Jovita's prophecies, and how she had mocked them; how cruel she had been to those who suffered for her; how she had laughed in their faces and turned away from their sighs.

She remembered Felipe, whom she had not spared one pang—Felipe, at whom she had only stared in scorn when he wept and wrung his hands before her. Had he felt like this when she sent him back to Seville to despair?

A cruel fever of restlessness burned her. She could find pleasure no more in the novelties of the city, in the gayeties of the gardens, in her own beauty.

Sometimes she was sure it was magic—the evil-eye. And she slipped away, poor child! and knelt in the still, cool church, and prayed to be delivered.

But once as she was doing this a sudden thought struck her.

"Not to think of him any more," she said, knitting her brows with yet another new pang. "Not to remember his face—not to remember his voice and the words he said! No, no!" And her rosary slipped from her fingers and fell upon the stone floor, and she picked it up and rose from her knees and went away.

All that day and night she thought and thought, and the next day went to pray again—but not that she might be delivered. She brought to the shrine at which she knelt substantial promises as offerings. Hers were not the prayers of a saint, but of a passionate, importunate child, self-willed and tempestuous. She would not have prayed if she could have hoped for help from any earthly means. She had never prayed for anything before. She had always taken what she wanted and gone her way; but she had had few needs. Now in this strange anguish she could do nothing for herself, and surely it was the place of the Virgin and the saints to help her. She stormed the painted wax figure in its niche with appeals which were innocently like demands.

Make him come back—make him come back to her. Mother of God, he must return! Make him come to the wall some night—yes, to-night. He must not know that she was like Sarita, but he must come; and whatsoever she did or said he must not go away again. She would sell her new necklace; the silver comb her mother had left, her—the comb her father had given her mother in the days of their courtship; she would do some work, and give to the Holy Mother some candles and flowers; but he must come back, and he must not go away again whatsoever she did.

She knelt upon the stone floor, her hands wrung together, pouring forth the same words breathlessly over and over, each reiteration more intense than the last, all her young strength going out into the appeal.

And still she had not yet reached the point of knowing what she should do and say when he came.

When she tried to rise to her feet she was obliged to make two efforts before she succeeded. She had given such a passion of strength to her siege that she was almost exhausted, and she went out into the dazzling sunlight trembling. She did this day after day, day after day, and at night she waited by the wall, but the road was always the same.

And she could hear nothing—not a word. She could not ask, even though sometimes as she sat and gazed at José with hungry eyes it seemed as if she must drop dead if he did not speak. But he did not speak because he could have told her but little, and was quite secure in his belief that the mere mention of Sebastiano's name angered her.

So the time went by—weeks and months—and at last one evening she went to the church and prayed a new prayer.

"Sacred Mother," she said, "I have sold the comb and the necklace, and I have worked and can keep my word. I have bought a little golden heart. And if he comes"—in a fainter whisper—"if he comes I will say nothing ill to him."

That night, for the first time, she heard of Sebastiano.

Little Carlos came in and was full of news.

"They say that Sebastiano has had great success, and that perhaps he will go to America."

"Where is America?" asked Jovita.

"It is at the other end of the world, and never yet have the people seen a bull-fight."

"Never?" said José, staring. "That is impossible!"

"It is true," answered Carlos. "And they are rich, and like new things; and the king has spoken of sending for Sebastiano. He will be rich enough to build a palace for his old age."

A few days later, in the dusk of the evening, there crept into the church a little figure familiar to the painted saints and the waxen Virgin. But to-day it wore a changed aspect. It moved slowly at first, reluctantly; the brilliant little face was pale; the eyes wild with torture. A moment it stood before the altar, and then flung up its arms with a fierce gesture.

"Mother of God," it cried, brokenly, "then if it must be so—tell him—tell him that I am like Sarita!" and fell upon the altar steps shuddering and sobbing like a beaten child.

—and fell upon the altar steps shuddering and sobbing like a beaten child.

CHAPTER IV.

And yet it was again weeks and weeks before she heard another word. In those weeks there were times when she hated José because he never once spoke of what she wished to hear. She could not speak herself—she could not ask questions; she could only wait—hungry and desolate. They would not even say—these people—whether he had gone to the King of America or not; whether he was at the other end of the world, or whether he was only in some other city. The truth was that José had innocently cautioned the others against speaking of one whom Pepita disliked to hear of.

"She does not like him," he said, sorrowfully. "Girls are like that sometimes. It makes her angry when one talks of him."

But slow as he was, he could not help seeing in time that something was wrong with Pepita. Sometimes she scarcely talked at all, and she did not flame up when Jovita grumbled; it seemed as if she scarcely heard. Her eyes had grown bigger, too, and there was a burning light in them. They always appeared to be asking something; often he found himself obliged to look up, and saw them fixed upon him, as if they meant to wrest something from him. The careless bird-like look had gone, the careless bird-like laughter and mocking. He began gradually to fancy she was always thinking of something that hurt and excited her. But then there was nothing. She had all she wanted. She had as many trinkets as the other girls; she had even more. She had so little work to do that she had sought some outside her home to fill her spare moments, and she loved no one. There was not a man she knew who would not have come if she had smiled. What, then, could it be? And how pretty she was! Prettier than ever; prettier because of the burning look in her eyes, and—and something else he could not explain; a kind of restless grace of movement, as if she was always on the alert.

"Are you not pleased with Madrid any longer?" he asked her once.

"Yes," she answered.

"Do you want anything?"

"No."

"It seems to me," he said, slowly, and with much caution, "that you do not amuse yourself as you did at first."

"It is not so new," she said; "but there is still pleasure enough." And for a moment she kept her great eager eyes fixed upon him, and then she moved slowly toward him and touched him with a soft touch on his big clumsy shoulder and said: "You are a good brother! You are a good brother!"

"I have always loved you," he said, with simple pride. "When we were children, you know I always promised that you should see better days."

She had forgotten to count the weeks and days, or to take note of the changing seasons, when one hot day in the early summer he came in—José—with an innocent joy in his face.

He looked questioningly at Pepita two or three times and then coughed.

"You will not mind now," he said. "It is so long ago, and it is all over. Sebastiano has come back. He did not go to America; he is in Madrid to-day. He came to me in the street; he did not avoid me; he was rejoiced to see me. It appears that it is all well with him. Afterward Manuel told me. It appears there is a very pretty girl he met in Lisbon—she is here now. It is said he will marry her."

Pepita clinched her hands and stared at him with eyes that burned as never before.

"It is not true!" she said through her teeth. "It is not true!"

José fell back two steps.

"Not true?" he stammered. "Why not? They say so."

"A man who slays bulls as he does," she said, "does not forget a woman in a day."

José was lost in amazement.

"I thought you believed nothing but ill of him," he said. "What has happened? You are angry—angry."

"It is not true about the girl from Lisbon," she said. "It is a lie they amuse themselves with."

Never had innocent José been so thunderstruck. This was beyond his understanding. He was afraid to speak, and kept looking sidewise at her as he ate his soup; but she said no more.

"What has happened?" he said to himself over and over again. "Will she not allow him to marry another, though she does not want him herself?"

Later he went out again. It must be confessed that he went in the hope of seeing Sebastiano, or at least hearing of him. There was no difficulty in hearing of him. In the wine-shops and at the street corners he was being talked of in every group. Of what else could people speak who knew he had returned? How there would be sport—how there would be pleasure! Life began to wear a more vivacious aspect. And what had he not done since he had left Madrid? Such success—such adulation! The impression among his adorers was that the whole world had been at his feet. Here and there one could hear snatches of song of which his name was the refrain. It was only because he so loved his own people that he had refused the magnificent offers made by the King of America. He had refused them; he had chosen to remain in Spain. He had come to Madrid. Soon he would appear before them again. He had even gained in strength and dexterity; and as to his good looks—ah! what a dashing, handsome fellow!

José had the good luck to see him again, even to speak to him. What fortune—what happiness! The honest fellow felt himself overjoyed. They were to be friends again.

It was quite late when he found himself walking homeward over the white road again. He had drunk wine enough to make him feel quite gay; and as he went he sang now and then a verse of a song about the joys of the bull-fight.

When he was about half-way home he thought he heard behind him the sound of rapid feet—light feet running. He stopped and looked back. What was it he saw, or thought he saw? Was it a small dark shape which flitted

instantly into the shadow of the trees? It looked like a woman who did not wish to be seen. Well, he would not look, then. What was the use of giving her trouble? He tramped on, perhaps a little more slowly. It was late for a woman to be out on the lonely road alone. It must be past midnight. Then the thought came to him that perhaps she wished to pass him. In that case he might look the other way, on the opposite side of the road. In fact, he crossed to the other side to leave the way clear, and went on good-naturedly, singing his song loudly and all out of tune. Yes, he had been right. Soon the footsteps drew nearer; the shadow within the shadow slipped past—ran swiftly. But by that time they were nearing his home, and there was a stretch of road unshaded by anything. The shadow hesitated, darted across the white space, and José, seeing it in the full light, uttered a cry, and started in pursuit. In but a few moments he had reached it and held it by the arm, feeling all the slender body breathless and panting.

In a few moments he had reached it, and held it by the arm, feeling all the slender body breathless and panting.

"Pepita!" he cried. "It is you?"

She let the mantilla drop from her face and stood and looked at him.

"Yes," she answered, "it is Pepita; and you need not ask—I will not tell you. I have been to—to look at something—and I will tell you nothing."

He put his hand up and rubbed his forehead violently. Then he let it drop.

"I shall not ask," he said. "You would do no wrong. You are a good girl; but—"

"You think I have gone mad," she said, with a sudden change of voice and a piteous little shiver. "Who knows? Perhaps some one has cast the evil-eye upon me. But I have done no harm, and I shall do none."

"No," he said, rather stupidly. "You would do no harm. Let us go in, then."

And without another word they went into the house, Pepita to her bed to be awake and gaze at the darkness, José to sit with his head in his hands and thinking a thousand wild thoughts until he fell asleep.

He could not know that where he had been she had been also; that when the snatches of song had been sung she had heard them; that when the people had talked of Sebastiano she had listened; that when Sebastiano had stood in the bright light she had stood in the shadow and watched. She had not thought of danger or of being discovered. She had only thought of one thing and listened for one thing—and once she had heard this thing discussed by some chattering young chulos.

"She is a pretty young girl," they said. "Not as pretty as that other, but handsome enough."

"She is a pretty young girl," they said. "Not as pretty as that other, but handsome enough. She was a little devil, that other. But it is a mistake for a man like him to marry. How can a man feel free to risk his life gayly when he has a woman hung about his neck?"

"He will not," she whispered, growing hot all over. "No, he has not forgotten. I have given the little heart and the flowers and candles. And he could not forget while I—He will come back."

She struggled with the passionate persistence of a child. Since she would not give him up, he was hers.

But she did not know what to do. There was nothing but to wait in this fever of strange misery and unrest, which grew more cruel every day; and at the bull-fight if he would only look—perhaps—yes, if he saw her face, he would understand and come.

In the days before the great entertainment took place she was like some little savage creature at bay. She could scarcely bear to hear the voices of those who spoke to her. Once she went into the church and threw herself upon her knees as usual, but when she looked up her eyes were fierce.

"If he does not come," she cried to the waxen Virgin, "I will pray to you no more—no more."

She knew that it was blasphemy, but she did not care; and before she went home she bought a sharp little knife and hid it in her breast.

"This," she whispered, "this—if it is true about the girl from Lisbon; but it is not true."

For many years afterward the day of the great bull-fight was remembered. No one who saw it forgot it as long as he lived. Affairs used to date from it in the minds of many.

A year had passed since that first brilliant day when Pepita had gone forth in her first festal dress. She remembered it all as she dressed herself on this other morning. The same day seemed to have come again; the same sunshine and deep blue sky. There were the same flowers nodding their heads; Jovita was grumbling a little in her haste, just as she had done then; and in the looking-glass there was the same little figure in the bright attire —the soft black hair, the red rose, the red mouth. As she looked, a sudden triumph made her radiant.

"I have not grown ugly," she said.

No, she had not grown ugly. She was too young and strong for that, and excitement had flushed her into new brilliance.

When she found herself seated among the fluttering fans of rainbow colors, that moment's glow of exultation left her. Strangely enough, she could not help thinking of the empty church and the waxen figure before which she had knelt, and then of the nights when she had stood watching by the wall, and then of the sharp little knife in her breast. And then came the clamor of the music and the grand entry of the moving stream of color and glitter dazzling her eyes. No; just at first she had not the power to look. Could it be she—Pepita—who felt dizzy and could not see? who could distinguish nothing in the splendid panorama of the triumphal march? And what clamor, what excitement there was on every side! "What bulls! What men!" they were saying about her.

Only she seemed, in the midst of all the loud-voiced eagerness and delight, to sit alone, a cold little figure vaguely tormented by the gayety and the voices and the color of fluttering fans and ribbons and costumes. The deep rose had fled from her face; she sat with her hands wrung on her knee and waited for one moment to come.

The great bull ran bellowing around the arena; little beribboned darts were flung at him and stuck in his shaggy shoulders; brilliant cloaks were flaunted in his face; taunting cries mocked him. He charged hither and thither in blind fury, scattering men and horses, who only returned again to the attack.

"It takes too long," communed Pepita, "It takes too long."

And then the voices began to call for Sebas-tiano. "Sebastiano! Sebastiano!" on every side—even the grand ladies and their cavaliers clapping their hands and calling also. The beauties in the high places were always ready to see him come, and to give him a welcome when he risked his life to amuse them.

He stepped forth in his rich dress and with his gallant bearing, a more beautiful and gay figure than ever, it seemed the excited people thought. He had grown finer, without doubt, they said. His face was a little pale, but that only made more beautiful his long dark eyes, under their dense,

straight, black lashes. It was the women who said this, and who saw the richness of his dress, the colors of his *devisa*, the close curl of his crisp hair, the grace of his movement. The men saw his superb limbs, his firm step, his quick glance, his bright sword.

"Come, little slayer of bulls," they shouted, "and show us what you would have taught the people of America."

And it appeared they were not to be disappointed in their expectation of sport. They saw that when he stood before the bull and made a little mocking bow of salute, he looked into its small, furious eyes with a smile, as it drew near—a bellowing black mass, snorting and throwing up the dust. It was as ready to begin as he. It rushed upon him, and he was gone. He played with it, led it on, defied it, eluded it. The flashing sword seemed to become a score of glittering blades; the people shouted—rose in their seats—leaned forward—laughed—mocked the bull—cried out praises of sword and man and beast—of each leap—each touch of the steel's point.

"He plays with it as if it were a little lamb," they cried. "Sebastiano! Sebastiano!"

Of what use to tell what must be seen in all its danger to be understood? The joy and exultation rose to fierce fever-heat, the cries swelled higher, faces flushed and eyes sparkled and flamed, while the brilliant figure darted, leaped, attacked, played with death as it had done scores of times before.

Only Pepita sat without color or applause—only Pepita's fan was motionless amidst all the fluttering—though her breast moved up and down, and the throbbing in her side was like the beating of a hammer. She was speaking to herself, though her lips were closed; she was speaking to Sebastiano.

"He will look soon," she was saying. "He will look as he did that first day. My eyes will make him look. They will force him to it. Listen! it is Pepita whose eyes are on you. You must feel them. You have not forgotten. No. And it is Pepita—Pepita!"

All the strength of her body and soul she threw into her gaze—all the fire of her young wildly beating heart and throbbing pulses.

"You must hear," she said. "Pepita! Pepita!"

And unconsciously she leaned forward so that her white face and great eyes, and the little black head with the rose burning in its hair, stood out among the faces of those about her.

And he looked up and saw her, and their eyes met; and without knowing she started to her feet.

No one knew, no one but herself saw, how it happened: even she did not understand until all was past. Their eyes met, as they had done on the day a year before. No, not as they had done then, but with a strange new look. Sebastiano started; the arena swam before him; there was a second—a fatal second in which he saw only a small face without color and the red rose which was the color of blood. Then there was a roar near him—a roar among the people—a wild shriek from the women. The bull was upon him; he made a misstep, and was caught, amid the shrieks and bellows, and flung inert far out upon the hoof-trodden dust with the blood pouring from his side.

"But," they said in the wine-shops at night, "when they took him up, though they thought him gasping in death, he had not lost himself; and as they carried him out they came upon a girl—the one who is called 'the pretty sister of José'—her brother was taking her away. She looked like one dead three days; and Sebastiano—there is a man for you!—tore the *devisa* from his shoulder and dropped it at her feet; and she snatched it up—all wet with his blood—and thrust it in her breast, and dropped like a stone. It is said that he loved her, and she had a devil of a temper and treated him badly. He is a good fellow—her brother José—and wept like a child for Sebastiano, and has begged to be allowed to nurse him, and Sebastiano will have it so."

"I am strong as an ox," José had said, weeping. "I can watch like a dog. I want neither sleep nor food, if it comes to that; and once when one of my comrades fell from a scaffold I was the only one who could nurse him without killing him with the pain. He will tell you that I nursed him well, and was never tired."

"Let him stay," said Sebastiano.

In his struggle with death, which lasted so long, it was always the large form and simple, anxious face of José he saw when he knew what passed around him, and even when the fever brought him delirious visions he was often vaguely conscious of his presence. For himself, he did not know whether he was to live or die; but one night he found out.

It was a beautiful night which came after a long day in which those about his bed had looked at him with pitying eyes, and at last a priest had come and absolved him of his sins, and left him with a solemn, kindly blessing, with a soul clear of stain and ready for paradise.

He had fallen asleep afterward, and had dreamed not of heaven but of earth, of a red rose in soft black hair, and of a passionate little face whose large eyes glowed upon him.

And suddenly he was wide awake, and found his dream a living truth.

José was no longer in the room. The moonlight made everything clear, and upon the floor beside him knelt Pepita, her eyes fixed upon his.

"Deos! Deos!" he murmured.

"Dios! Dios!" he murmured.

"Hush!" she said. "Do not speak. It is Pepita. Look at me. They said that perhaps to-night you would die. I have prayed until I can pray no more,

and when I came to José the tears were falling from his eyes, and he said perhaps you would not see the day. Then I showed him the little knife hidden in my breast, and told him if he did not let me come to you alone I would not live. I said I could force you to remain on earth. I love you—I love you. It has all happened, that which you said would happen; and when the *devisa* fell at my feet I hid it in my breast with the other which was there before. And because I love you so, you cannot die. I will do anything you say I must do. I am Pepita, and I give myself to you. I would give my blood and my life and my soul for you. Every night I have waited by the wall in the hope that you would come. I have watched you when you did not see me. If you had not come I should have killed myself; if you die, I will drive the knife to its hilt in my heart. I can love more than those women who love so easily and so often. I knew nothing about it when I was so proud and mocked you. I know now. Mother of God! it is like a thousand deaths when one cannot see the face one wants. What hunger night and day!—one is driven mad by it!"

She bent more closely over him, crushing his un wounded hand against her heart—searching his soul with her look.

"They said there was a girl in Lisbon whom you loved," she said. "I knew it was a lie."

"Yes," he whispered, "it was a lie. Kiss me on the mouth."

His arm curved itself around her neck, and the red lips which had mocked melted upon his own.

"Did you suffer?" he murmured.

She began to sob like a child, as she had sobbed at the feet of the Virgin.

"I told you that you would suffer! It was the same thing with me. Saints of Heaven! human beings cannot bear that long. I shall not die, and I will make you forget the pain. Stay with me, and let me see your eyes and touch your lips every hour, that I may know you are Pepita, and that you have given yourself to me."

"I will stay through all the day and night," she answered. "They cannot make me go away if I do not wish it. They always give me my way. I have

always had it—the Virgin herself has given it to me."

It seemed this was true. In a few months from then the people who strolled in the Public Garden on Sunday looked at a beautiful young couple who walked together.

"There are two who are mad with love for each other," it was said. "Sebastiano and his wife. She is the one he threw his *devisa* to when he thought himself a dead man. They used to call her 'the pretty sister of Jose.'"

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